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SWAT AND GO TIME

Regina's city police SWAT team geared up, so to speak, on Thursday by training with an armoured vehicle on loan from the RCMP. The tactical armoured vehicle, or TAV, will be used by the team for drills throughout the Regina area for the next week, and will be available to the city force on short notice when needed from the Mounties from now on. Members were put through their paces by a former Los Angeles Police Department SWAT member at the former Ken Jenkins School on 2nd Avenue North. See more on page 4. ROSS ROMANIUK/METRO

Man gets 9 years for stabbing retired Mountie

Found guilty of attempted murder. Ryan Dalton Kelly Bear attacked ex-officer who had offered to help fix his tire near Outlook

A man convicted of trying to kill a retired RCMP officer in Saskatchewan has been sentenced to nine years in prison.

Ryan Dalton Kelly Bear of the Dakota Whitecap First Nation stabbed Robert Laidlaw at a landing development north of Outlook in May 2012.

Laidlaw had stopped to see if Bear needed help with a flat tire and started asking questions when he suspected Bear's vehicle may have been stolen.

Court heard at Bear's trial that he became angry, threatened to slit Laidlaw's throat and stabbed him twice near the heart and lungs.

Aftermath

Laidlaw, who did not provide a victim impact statement, told the author of the pre-sentence report that the injuries he sustained are a daily annoyance and he's "lucky the damage was not worse."

The defence told Bear's sentencing hearing that he needed the knife because of the violence he has seen in his life.

Last month, the Crown suggested that Bear's anger issues should be a factor in his sentencing, while the defence argued that the attack was unplanned and Bear feels terrible about what happened.

Crown prosecutor Bryce Pashovitz pointed to a pre-sentence and psychological report which said Bear is easily agitated and often acts impulsively. Court heard he had been angry with family members before the stabbing and always carried a knife for protection after one of his relatives was attacked.

Defence lawyer Darren Winegarden pointed out that Bear had no criminal record and admitted to his involvement early in the case. The lawyer also suggested that, despite the verdict, Bear did not have pre-meditated intent to kill.

He said Bear often smoked marijuana to deal with his anger issues and that he had heard voices during the attack telling him to stab Laidlaw. That wasn't revealed during the trial because it took Bear some time to come to that realization, said Winegarden.

THE CANADIAN PRESS, CKOM

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Health care

Regina, Saskatoon regions lagging in surgery wait times

Ron Epp, director of the Saskatchewan Surgical Initiative, said on Thursday that by March, the goal is to have all Saskatchewan health regions offer surgery to patients within three months from the date they are booked.

But the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region, he said, won't hit that mark until close to 2015.

Just 68 per cent of surgeries there are currently performed in the three-month target, as opposed to the provincial average of 79 per cent.

"They've had some operational challenges," said Epp. "Specifically, they've seen a significant increase in demand for orthopedic surgeries, and also had challenges in staffing (operating room) nurses."

Val Hunko, vice-president of integrated health services at Regina Qu'Appelle, said an action plan was launched in May 2012 to confront these issues.

The region has overcome the nursing shortage with help from outside agencies, she said, and is working to increase retention rates by taking staff recommendations.

Meanwhile, Jenny Bartsch, director for surgical services with the Saskatoon Health Region, said the organization had about 800 more surgeries this year than expected. "It's very likely due to population increase," said Bartsch.

Bartsch said they probably aren't going to be able to achieve the Saskatchewan Surgical Initiative requirement in Saskatoon until "further along in 2014."

JACOB MORGAN/METRO IN SASKATOON

City working on a cold weather strategy for Regina's homeless

First thing's first.
Mayor wants to determine city's homeless population as first step towards more warm beds

SARAH TAGUIAM
sarah.taguiam@metronews.ca

After some homeless people were turned away from Regina shelters last winter, city hall has formed a cold-weather plan to ensure that doesn't happen again.

But according to Mayor Michael Fougere, one of the first steps is determining Regina's homeless population and who remains homeless in the winter.

"It's very unclear how many are homeless in the city." Fougere told Metro on Thursday, before the issue was dealt with in a municipal meeting.

According to the plan, each shelter patron must have access to a bed or a cot instead of sleeping on the floor or a chair.

Warm indoor spaces must also be available 24 hours a day.

As well, families and couples should be able to stay together and all individuals, including intoxicated persons and those previously banned from facilities, must be admitted to shelters.

"Some years, we didn't have enough shelter for those outside on those cold nights," Fougere said.

The city is working with the province and the federal government to change that.

From 2014 to 2019, a portion of a yearly $1.1-million fund from the federal government would be used to increase the number of emergency shelters in Regina.

The city has three year-round shelters — Salvation Army's Waterston Centre, Souls Harbour Rescue Mission and the YWCA's My Aunt's Place — that provide 103 beds, some of them for cold-weather response.

They would also encourage shelters to use the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System, a federal database used to identify and quantify homeless people.

The city will hear reports on Regina's homeless rate in the third quarter of next year.

Timeline

The plan will be set into motion yearly between Nov. 1 and March 31, with possible extensions if frigid weather persists.

Quoted

"It's hard to fix what you can't define."

Mayor Michael Fougere,
on why the city must determine its homeless population.

Under Regina's new strategy, Mayor Michael Fougere says no one will be denied access to shelters including Salvation Army's Waterston Centre. SARAH TAGUIAM/METRO

Dustin Paxton a dangerous offender: Judge

Alberta Crown prosecutor Joe Mercier. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Court. Crown prosecutor Joe Mercier said Thursday that the important thing is that the public is safe

An Alberta judge has determined a convicted torturer meets the criteria to be considered a dangerous offender and has handed him an indeterminate prison sentence.

Dustin Paxton slouched in his seat, shook his head and smirked as Justice Sheilah Martin delivered her decision on Thursday in Calgary Court of Queen's Bench.

"I find that Mr. Paxton constitutes a threat to the life, safety or physical or mental well-being of other persons," Martin said. "The protection of the public must figure prominently."

She said the Crown has fully proven Paxton, 33, is a dangerous offender who has shown indifference to his crimes.

The National Parole Board will review Paxton's case seven years from the point he was taken into custody and every two years after that.

Paxton was convicted in February 2012 of aggravated and sexual assault for the prolonged and brutal abuse of a man who was his friend and roommate.

The man was dropped off, near death, at a Regina hospital in April 2010. He was emaciated, battered and bleeding.

Crown prosecutor Joe Mercier said Thursday that the important thing is that the public is safe.

"There are people who are profoundly affected for the rest of their lives," said Mercier. "It's been a long, long haul. There have been a lot of people who have been affected by this particular case. It was hard on a lot of people." THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Practice drill. Regina SWAT team gets new tool on loan from Mounties

SWAT members practice moving a victim — a mannequin — in need of help in Regina on Thursday. ROSS ROMANIUK/METRO

Regina police special weapons and tactics (SWAT) team members got a leg up on their training on Thursday, practising moving a victim — in this case, a mannequin — across a snowy lane adjacent to the former Ken Jenkins School on 2nd Avenue North.

The city SWAT unit is training across the Regina area using a tactical armoured vehicle loaned through a new agreement with Saskatchewan RCMP.

City police are advising the public that the armoured vehicle on Regina streets in the coming days doesn't mean that the team is responding to a real emergency. METRO

Health care

Toddler puts hands in pail of dirty needles; hospitals take action

Saskatchewan's health minister says health regions across the province have taken steps to make sure containers with used needles are secure after a toddler put her hands into a pail of syringes at a hospital.

Dustin Duncan asked the regions to do an audit in November to make sure all facilities are following the rules for proper disposal.

The audit was ordered after a toddler put her hands into a hazardous-waste bucket in the emergency room at the hospital in Outlook, south of Saskatoon. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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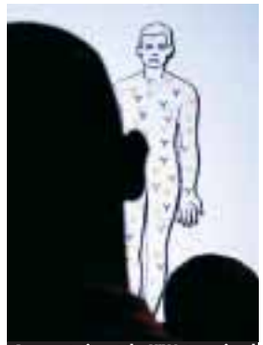
Epilepsy drug offers promise in AIDS fight

'Works beautifully' in human tissue. Scientists believe it could prevent HIV from attacking the immune system


A presentation at the XIX International AIDS Conference in Washington in July. CAROLYN KESTER/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Can an experimental drug developed to treat epilepsy block the AIDS virus? A preliminary lab study suggests it's possible, and researchers are eager to try it in people.

Scientists experimented with the drug after uncovering details of how they believe HIV cripples the immune system to bring on AIDS.

When tested in human tissues in the laboratory, the drug "works beautifully" to prevent HIV from destroying key cells of the immune system, said Dr. Warner Greene of the Gladstone Institutes in San Francisco. Those results appear in a paper by Greene and others published Thursday on Nature.

Researchers have long known HIV infects some vital CD4 cells in the immune system and turns them into virus-producing factories, killing them in the process.

The epilepsy drug, which is not on the market, blocks an enzyme that the research identified as playing a key role in that immune system attack.

Prior studies of the drug in people show it is safe, Greene said. So the researchers are talking to the drug company about testing it in people infected with HIV. No timeline for such studies has been set, he said.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Love between a rock and a hard place

A couple shares a tender moment in front of a poster of jailed Ukrainian former prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko during a rally in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Thursday. Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych has been facing massive protests over his decision to spike a pact with the EU in favour of Russia. A $15-billion bailout from Moscow, says Russian President Vladimir Putin, was aimed at helping a partner in difficulties. DMITRY LOVETSKY/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cairo activists busted, Mubarak sons acquitted

Egypt's military-backed authorities on Thursday stepped up their crackdown on liberal icons of the 2011 uprising against Hosni Mubarak, with security forces storming the headquarters of a rights group to arrest six activists, including a prominent youth organizer.

Hours after the early morning raid in downtown Cairo, a criminal court acquitted Hosni Mubarak's two sons and his last prime minister of corruption charges in a case involving a land sale some 20 years ago. The sons remain in detention on other corruption charges.

Five of the activists were released after nearly seven hours. One of them, lawyer Mahmoud Bilal, described in a news conference how plainclothes policemen blindfolded, beat and verbally abused them after binding their hands.

The raid and the acquittal of Mubarak's sons and Ahmed Shafiq will likely fuel growing suspicions that the government installed by the military after ousting Islamist President Mohammed Morsi is ready to accommodate Mubarak-era figures while facing near-daily street protests from Morsi supporters and growing dissent by liberal and secular youth groups. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Left prison to see mom

Italian serial killer on the lam

Italian police on Thursday conducted a manhunt for a serial killer who didn't return to a Genoa prison after taking a two-day good behaviour pass to see his elderly mother.

Bartolomeo Gagliano is armed and dangerous, Genoa police official Fausto Lamparelli said.

There are fears that he might have driven across the nearby border into France. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Jury rules self-inflicted cell death a homicide

The videotaped choking death of a teenager in her segregation cell six years ago was a homicide, a jury decided on Thursday, sparking calls for police to reopen their criminal investigation into the tragedy.

The Ashley Smith inquest decision drew a gasp from a packed coroner's courtroom, which also heard jurors make 104 recommendations on dealing with self-harming, mentally ill women in federal prisons.

While the homicide decision is not a finding of legal liability, Smith's family lawyer immediately called for police to get involved, and lashed out at Correctional Service Canada.

"It is high time that those in charge are held accountable," Julian Falconer said.

"CSC, in my decades of work in this area, has proven they are an uncontrollable, unaccountable body. It is shameful."

Falconer called for the resignation of CSC Commissioner Don Head, who had warned jurors against making recommendations that would be expensive to implement.

The emotionally disturbed Smith, 19, of Moncton, N.B., strangled herself in her cell at the Grand Valley Institution in Kitchener, Ont., on Oct. 19, 2007.

Guards, under orders from senior management against intervening as long as she was still breathing, waited too long to enter the cell and save her.

The verdict by the five female jurors made it clear they accepted the evidence of front-line guards about the no-entry orders. Several guards and a supervisor were initially charged with criminal negligence in Smith's death — but they were dropped.

"Those who made the order not to go into her cell — the deputy warden, the warden, those above — have yet to be truly investigated or yet to truly answer for their actions," Falconer said. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Recommendations

The inquest heard evidence from 83 witnesses over 107 days starting in January about how poorly equipped the prison system was to deal with the mentally ill young woman.

- Among their sweeping recommendations, jurors urged that female inmates with serious mental-health issues or self-harming behaviours should serve time in a specialized treatment facility.
- The focus in dealing with such women, jurors said, should be on therapy, with treatment decisions made by clinicians rather than by security management.

Ashley Smith's family lawyers Julian Falconer, left, and Julian Roy address the media outside of the coroner's court following the Ashley Smith inquest verdict in Toronto on Thursday. MARK BLINCH/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Quoted

"What happened to Ashley should never have happened. The concoctions of her as being violent were false; they were concocted in a way to justify a punitive treatment of her."

Kim Pate, the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies

A woman stands bandaged and wearing a blanket given by emergency services following an incident at the Apollo Theatre in London's Shaftesbury Avenue on Thursday during a performance at the height of the Christmas season. Police said there were "a number" of casualties. JOEL RYAN, INVISION/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dozens injured in theatre collapse

London. An evening performance turned into a disaster as part of the ceiling came crashing down onto audience members

Plaster and dust rained down on a packed audience when the ceiling of a London, England, theatre partially collapsed Thursday night. More than 75 people were injured — seven seriously, authorities said.

The collapse at the Apollo Theatre took place around 8:15 p.m. during a performance of The Curious Incident Of The Dog In The Night-Time.

Plaster and masonry from a section of the ceiling tumbled down, bringing parts of the theatre's balconies down with it onto the audience, police said.

More than 700 people were in the theatre at the time, said the London Fire Brigade.

Officials said most of the injured were "walking wounded" with upper-body injuries, and that all are conscious.

Police and fire officials said it was too soon to say what had caused the partial collapse of the ceiling, but that a full investigation is being carried out.

"Complete chaos" erupted as the debris rained down, said Martin Bostock, who came with his family to see the show.

"At first, we thought it was part of the show," he told Sky News. "Then I got hit on the head." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Treating the injured

- Theatregoers were treated by dozens of emergency workers in the street outside the Apollo and at a nearby theatre.
- London Ambulance Service said it had treated 76 patients, with 51 taken to hospitals. Seven people suffered "serious injuries" but there were no fatalities and none of the injuries are believed to be life-threatening.
- The fire department reported that all those trapped in the Apollo have been rescued.

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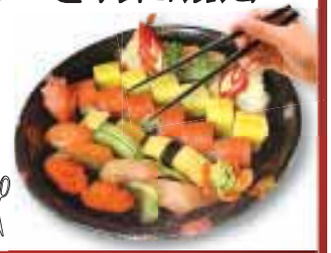

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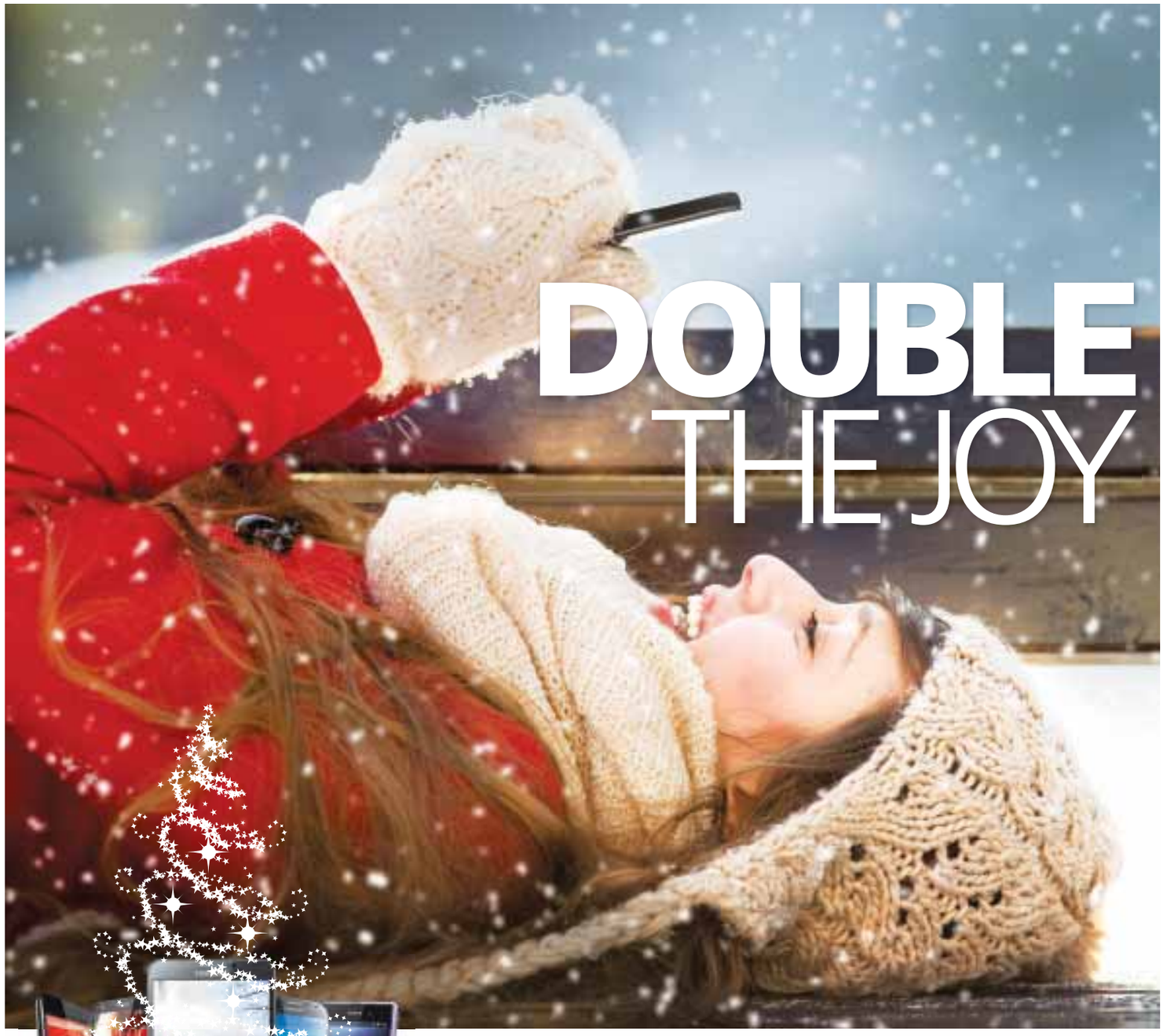

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Canada's largest charities

Funds raised by donations, special events (in millions)

1. Canadian Red Cross: $287.0
2. World Vision: $282.2
3. Canadian Cancer Society: $188.4
4. Salvation Army: $180.9
5. Heart & Stroke Foundation of Canada: $124.0
6. United Way Toronto: $116.9
7. SickKids Foundation: $ 110.1
8. Plan International: $107.1
9. Aga Khan Foundation Canada: $98.0
10. Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation: $80.3

(Source: Charity Intelligence Canada)

Volunteer hours logged

2.07B

The Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating said 94 per cent of Canadians aged 15 and up combined to donate $10.6 billion in 2010. Some 13.3 million people gave their time, combining for 2.07 billion hours of volunteer work — about the same as 1.1 million full-time jobs.

How

- Telemarketing is unpopular and door-to-door appeals have declined substantially. Weinberg says volunteer door-knockers are harder to find and residents may not be at home. If they are, they may not answer for fear of a scam. Supermarket checkout appeals and e-giving are among the alternatives.

Quoted

"Non-profit organizations have to be inventive, have to recognize that the way people part with their money is changing."

Prof. Charles Weinberg, of the University of British Columbia's Sauder School of Business

Giving less than Americans

0.64%

The Fraser Institute's 2013 Generosity Index found Canadians donated 0.64 per cent of their aggregate incomes to charity in 2011, half the 1.33 per cent given by United States tax filers.

Social beings

- Social media is a novel platform for charities to spread the word and get noticed in a crowded market; the Movember fundraiser is a case in point. But a UBC-led study, The Nature of Slacktivism, found a Facebook "like" for a certain cause often translated to no donation at all. Giving via text message is also highly convenient, especially for disaster relief appeals. CharityIntelligence.ca and CharityFocus.ca offer quick, easy ways to research charities' financial reports, before using portals like CanadaHelps.org and Chimp.net to contribute.

Women slightly more generous

4%

Women were four per cent more likely to donate money to charities than men. The 15-to-34 age group was less likely to give than baby boomers.

Quoted

"There is far more financial pressure on young people these days than there was historically and in terms of time being squeezed for volunteering."

Prof. Peter Elson, director of the Institute for Nonprofit Studies at Calgary's Mount Royal University

It's one man's gig to give year-round

Spreading the joy. Thousands of toys — up to 75,000 — will be donated to children this holiday season

BOB MACKIN
For Metro in Vancouver

Lower Mainland Christmas Bureau executive director Chris Bayliss in the East Vancouver warehouse, among Okanagan apple bins used for sorting donations. BOB MACKIN/FOR METRO IN VANCOUVER

Tonka trucks, hockey sticks, Barbie dolls, soccer balls and remote controlled minidrones are stacked on shelves of a modest, three-storey Vancouver warehouse — the secret Santa central, if you will.

The Lower Mainland Christmas Bureau, founded in 1930, helps 1,000 families directly and more than 40,000 children and youth around the region get toys, books and clothes for Christmas.

"It means a lot to me," said Angela Woods as she left the bureau's headquarters with Christmas surprises for her son. "If they didn't have this every year, I wouldn't know what to do. They're awesome up there, they are amazing."

It's the season for giving, and a recent Ipsos Reid poll found that 87 per cent of poll respondents said they enjoy feeling good about giving to charity. Only 13 per cent got the "bah, humbugs" over the thought of giving to a charity during the holidays. That means charities like the Lower Mainland Christmas Bureau go from silent to crazy in a very short period.

"The bureau quietly chugs along, collecting toys, disbursing them to other bureaus and shelters, then we open for this three weeks," said executive director Chris Bayliss. "It goes from a quiet, boring, ugly warehouse on the Eastside to often full of volunteers and people, full of fun for a month."

The Christmas Bureau collects toys at big events throughout fall, from the Greater Vancouver Motorcycle Toy Run to the Vancouver Giants' Teddy Bear Toss to the Pan Pacific Christmas Wish Breakfast, which attracted 15 tonnes of donations on Dec. 11.

"The regional role is changing, as Metro Vancouver grows further afield we get more and more working poor," Bayliss says. "I was brought up my whole life to believe this, we're all two paycheques away from being broke."

In 2001, the Christmas Bureau gave 17,000 donated toys to needy homes. This year, Bayliss estimates some 50,000 to 75,000 toys and books, plus about 5,000 clothes and coats, will put smiles on children's faces.

Bayliss and a part-timer are employed year-round. A dozen workers join for three to 10 weeks in the run-up to Christmas. He estimated volunteers worked 800 person hours on-site last December.

A good way to give

Transparency can aid charities

"Whether you're at the checkout counter, the Salvation Army kettles or when you get the mail, it's almost overwhelming how many 'asks' you get," said Charity Intelligence Canada managing director Kate Bahen.

Bahen's Toronto organization gauges transparency of non-profits and publishes reports on the finances of 500 charities on its website. Bahen said Canadians deserve proof that their donations are spent wisely and make a difference.

"To whom much is given, much is expected," she said.

Charities must "more effectively report what did you do with the money, how did you spend it, who did you work with, what was the social impact?" Bahen said. "How did you help Canada?"

Who

- Canadians who attend a place of worship weekly are more inclined to donate and make larger donations. That's why religious organizations benefitted from $4.26 billion in 2010 donations. The health sector ($1.59 billion) and social services ($1.16 billion) were next in popularity.
- Prof. Charles Weinberg, of the University of British Columbia's Sauder School of Business, said planned giving takes a backseat to impulse giving at this time of year. "It's the holiday season, you're in a good mood and what about, sadly, people that don't have enough food or kids that don't have toys?"

Total tax filers

24.8M

The number of tax filers in Canada, according to Statistics Canada: 24,841,630.

Dec. 31

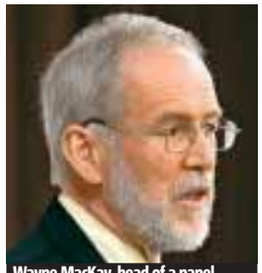
- New Year's Eve is the deadline to donate for the 2013 tax year, but tax breaks were cited as the motivator by only 23 per cent in a 2012 Statistics Canada report on giving.
- Compassion for those in need (90 per cent), belief in a cause (86 per cent) and contributing to the community (80 per cent) were the top three reasons.

2019

- Canadian charities will be forced to adapt for future holiday seasons. By 2019, Canada Post will stop delivering mail door-to-door in urban areas.

Saint Mary's needs code of conduct: Panel

Frosh chant fallout.
Report stresses importance of changing norms that gave rise to sex-assault-promoting behaviour at university



Wayne MacKay, head of a panel formed after a frosh-week chant that glorified sexual assault, released his report on Thursday.
ANDREW VAUGHAN/THE CANADIAN PRESS

A panel launched in the aftermath of a frosh-week chant that glorified the sexual assault of young girls delivered a report Thursday calling on Saint Mary's University to develop a school-wide code of conduct.

The report makes 20 recommendations aimed at fostering a cultural change at the Halifax school to prevent sexual violence and encourage respectful behaviour.

It says the chant at Saint Mary's University, along with a similar one sung during an orientation week event at the University of British Columbia, highlighted broad societal challenges that need to be addressed rather than issues specific to youth culture.

"Hypersexualized songs, photos, movies and advertisements are omnipresent. Alcohol and drug problems abound — even among public figures that are supposed to be role models," says the 110-page report.

"The Internet and social media are forces for good but also have a much darker side like easy access to pornography, cyberbullying and the deterioration of people's capacity to form meaningful 'in-person' relationships."

Wayne MacKay, a law professor at Dalhousie University, was appointed to lead the panel that consulted with students, faculty members and alumni about ways to avoid similar incidents in the future.

MacKay said the code of conduct should establish clear standards of behavioural norms that would apply to all members of the university community and there should be consequences for people who breach it.

He said Saint Mary's University should also invest in education programs to teach students about healthy sexuality and the importance of consent.

The university set up the panel after a video surfaced on Instagram showing student leaders singing a chant about underage, non-consensual sex to about 400 new students at an event during orientation week in September.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Unhealthy bribes

Pamela Mattock Porter leaves court after her request to have her bail conditions changed so she can spend the winter in Florida were denied Thursday in Montreal. Porter is charged along with her husband, Arthur Porter, the former chief executive officer of the McGill University Health Centre, of laundering $22.5 million that is alleged to have been paid in bribes by former SNC-Lavalin executives to secure the $1.3-billion super-hospital construction contract. RYAN REMIORZ/THE CANADIAN PRESS

China

Cartoon spurred violence: Court

State media say a Chinese court has ruled the producer of a hit kids cartoon is partly to blame for the injuries suffered by two children when their friend tied them to a tree and set them on fire in an imitation of a scene from the show. Xinhua News Agency says two young brothers were badly burned in April by the actions of their 10-year-old friend.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pennsylvania

Defrocked pastor plans to fight anti-gay doctrine

A United Methodist Church pastor defrocked for officiating the gay wedding of his son says he intends to appeal the church officials' decision. Frank Schaefer says he will continue to fight to eradicate discriminatory language in church doctrine. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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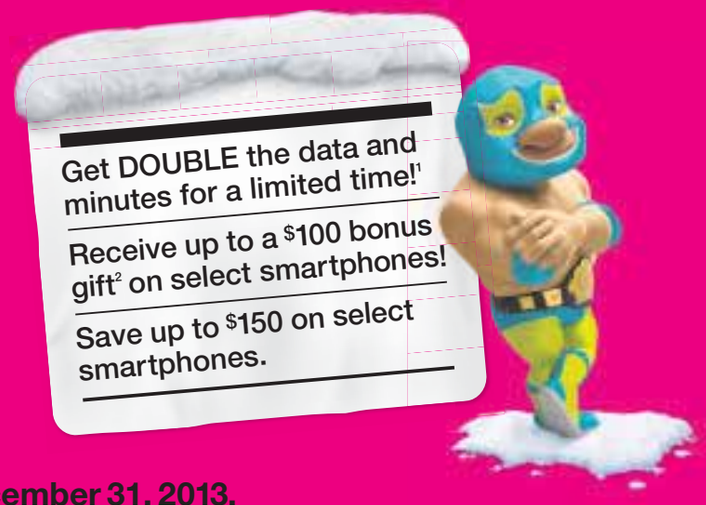
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(1) See store for details. (2) Bonus gift will vary by store location. See store for full details. Bonus gift available with new activations only. While quantities last.

Faux no to faux yes: Vegan leather, fake fur so hot right now

Faux is the new black. Pleasantly surprise the fashion plate on your gift list with something fake

Finding a knockoff version of the fur you want under the Christmas tree would ordinarily be a disappointment.

Not this year.

Faux is the new black this season for holiday gifts. But this isn't the "pleather" of the 1980s — that cheap, plastic-looking material made popular by Michael Jackson during his Thriller days.

A $198 fuzzy brown coat at Banana Republic has a prominently placed tag that reads "faux fur."

Dresses with "vegan leather" accents are flying off virtual shelves at shopbop.com. And at luxury retailer Barney's, a Marni faux leather three-quarter sleeve jacket sells for $1,900.

Faux is gaining popularity in part because there have been advances in technology enabling designers to make better-looking fakes. In a still-shaky economy that has made Americans more frugal, faux also can be seen as a good way to be trendy without breaking the bank. And a movement toward socially conscious shopping makes some people feel better about faux purchases.

Banana Republic's Fair Isle faux-fur neck warmer. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

It helps that some A-listers have given faux their seal of approval. Models have been seen on the runway wearing faux leather pieces in shows for big-name designers like Tom Ford and Rag & Bone. And actresses Anne Hathaway and Kate Hudson have strutted on the red carpet in faux leather and fur.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

$6B proposal. Panel gives OK to Northern Gateway pipeline, with conditions

A review panel is recommending that the proposed Northern Gateway pipeline that would connect the Alberta oilsands to tankers on the B.C. coast go ahead.

But the panel has attached 209 conditions to the project.

The final decision rests with the federal government, which has roughly six months to respond to the report.

The controversial $6-billion proposal has pitted Calgary-based Enbridge against environmental groups and several First Nations.

They have raised concerns about the possibility of an oilspill on land or off the coast of British Columbia.

Supporters say the line is critical if Alberta is to get its oil to emerging markets in Asia. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Danny Nunes holds a sign in support of the Enbridge Northern Gateway Project outside hearings for the project in Kitimaat Village, B.C., last year. THE CANDIAN PRESS

Take a bow, Canada

American happy we no longer get home mail delivery

The announced demise of home mail delivery in Canada has prompted a celebratory reaction from one U.S. lawmaker, who longs to see his own country adopt a similar reform to end residential postal service.

A Republican congressman "applauded" the move. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Market Minute

DOLLAR 93.76¢ (+0.21¢)

TSX 13,392.20 (+57.47)

OIL $98.77 US (+$0.97)

GOLD $1,193.60 US (-$41.40)

Natural gas: $4.44 US (+$0.17)
Dow Jones: 16,179.08 (+11.11)

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THE METRO LIST

Neil Morton
metronews.ca

1 Twitter vending machines. Telus created a Twitter-enabled vending machine at the Pacific Centre Shopping Mall in Vancouver that rewards tweeting consumers with toy pandas as part of a partnership with the World Wildlife Fund. They're on to something, I hope. In the future, I'll be able to tweet a vending machine using a hashtag such as #bbqdoritos, and out that bag will come.

2 Instagram messaging. The social media photo site has introduced Instagram Direct, allowing you to message your buds photos and videos. Hmmm, isn't Snapchat for private messaging someone a photo or video? (Well, true, those disappear). My wish is to someday be tweeting a Instagram photo via direct message on Snapchat using Facebook. That will simplify everything.

3 Beyoncé's social media blitz. Foregoing traditional media channels, Beyoncé released her latest album with a simple "Surprise!" to her more than eight million Instagram followers — and the full album appeared for sale on iTunes. It hit a record for albums sold on the site. Goes to show (again) that sometimes the best marketing is no marketing. Of course, it helps if you're a pop culture icon.

4 Arlene Dickinson. One of my fave stars of Dragons' Den has a new book out, All In, about balancing your personal and professional life when you're a entrepreneur. I fancy myself an entrepreneur, so I'll be reading it this Christmas morning when I receive it as a stocking stuffer from my wife. If she reads this.

5 Stuff on Scout's Head. Photos of pets on the Internet — particularly cats and dogs — do really, *really* well. The most famous is Grumpy Cat, discovered on news site Reddit. An up-and-coming contender perhaps is the Canadian version: Stuff on Scout's Head, which features a pit bull with stuff that his owner puts on his head — everything from a toque to a pie to a skateboard. I cannot explain the Internet.

6 Peterborough Turkey. A picture of a turkey standing in a transit shelter next to a Canada Post box in Peterborough, Ont., went viral this week. The turkey had been stopping traffic recently on a major road. At least it's learning to take the bus now. So why else did this turkey pic catch on? "Turkeys — they are like kittens with beaks," one person tweeted.

7 Survivor Brand. Tyson Apostol won the 27th edition of the TV show Survivor in a rather lacklustre season that ended with the lowest rating for a Survivor finale ever. With the iconic reality show slumping in ratings in recent years, it may be time to reinvent the brand. Add more villains. Or have only villains. The world loves watching villains on TV. Or just let all competitors use social media.

8 Carl McCoid. This guy from Yorkshire, England, keeps getting tattoos of Miley Cyrus. He now has 22 different ones of her. This guy is a human wrecking ball with Miley Cyrus all over him.

9 Sorry, we're great. A CNN post titled 10 Things Canada Does Better Than Anywhere Else got a lot of attention this week with its list that included apologizing, lake and cottage country, stand-in movie locations, humour and more. Sorry, but the only thing they missed is beer. We make (and drink) better beer than anyone, eh?

10 Scarlett Johansson and cheese. Under the headline: Scarlett Johansson Has Weird Feelings About Cheese, on NY Magazine, the actress was quoted as saying: "I don't eat it, but I love it ... I like to smell cheese, I like to watch people enjoying it and I like to encourage people to eat cheeses I know taste really good. But I don't eat it any more because my body just does better without it." Life doesn't get weirder or cheesier than that.

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ZOOM

Photo shoot goes swimmingly

CANADIAN MUSEUM OF NATURE/HANDOUT/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Museum has a few bones to pick

For most people, fish bones may be just an annoyance at dinnertime.

But a new exhibition at the Canadian Museum of Nature, in Ottawa, could give viewers a broader perspective.

X-rays of Arctic Fishes, opening Jan. 11, features images that show "the spectacular osteological architecture of fishes," such as this X-ray of a boa dragonfish (pictured), says museum ichthyologist (fish scientist) Noel Alfonso.

Fish are considered to have the most complex bone structures of all vertebrates. That makes osteology — the study of bones — more challenging with fish than with other animals possessing a spinal column.

As revealed in X-rays, the number of vertebrae can be used to differentiate one fish species from another, Alfonso said. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Skin, bone and dinner

- An X-ray of a 14-centimetre-long boa dragonfish (not pictured), reveals a fish in its stomach. That makes this specimen a rare find, since "these things can often go for months without feeding," said Alfonso.

Clickbait

HANNAH ZITNER
hannah.zitner@metronews.ca

CONTRIBUTED

If the dark mornings, cold evenings and slushy all-the-times have you taking your fitness routine inside, don't sweat it. Or rather do (but without the monotony of the exercise machine). From the makers of Guitar Hero, Goji Play is the latest 'gamercising' gimmick helping gamers get to the gym. Using two wireless controllers and a clip-on sensor, gym-goers can turn their treadmill into a gaming console while blasting away Christmas calories. As you ramp up the speed on the stepper, watch as your character gains power and speed — while keeping track of your sweaty stats (kilometres, calories, etc.). Here's a couple of games to get you started.

Fisticuffs:
Get in the ring with fighters including a drunken sailor, angry Viking and top-hat wearing bar keeper.

Shine Runner:
Cruise around the bayou in a fan boat picking up moonshine, snake oil and crawdads as ammo to keep you in the game.

Super Moto X:
Race through a city of the future while jumping over obstacles, avoiding slow zones and steering clear of the 5-0.

Comments

RE: 'Outdated' Nova Scotia Law Requires All Men To Shovel Highway Snow, published online Dec. 18

Pssst. Subsection A: All physically fit female persons between the ages of 16 and 60 are required to make hot chocolate with marshmallows on the highways during winter for the male persons who work with their shovels on the highways during winter. **Aeric posted to metronews.ca**

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU:
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SCENE 2

Synopsis

Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues opened this week bringing confident but thick news anchor Ron Burgundy (Will Ferrell) back to the big screen after a nine year absence. The first film made catchphrases like, "I love scotch. Scotchy, scotch, scotch," and the names Brick Tamland (Steve Carell), Brian Fantana (Paul Rudd) and Champion "Champ" Kind (David Koechner) household words. In celebration of the return of the team from San Diego's KVWN Channel 4 the Reel Guys have a look back at the career of funnyman Will Ferrell.

Will Ferrell reprises his role as blustering anchorman Ron Burgundy in Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues. CONTRIBUTED

Where there's a Will, there's a way to laugh

Reel Guys

RICHARD CROUSE AND MARK BRESLIN

Funnyman Ferrell. In honour of the return of Ron Burgundy, the Reel Guys review their favourite Ferrell flicks

Richard: Mark, I think Will Ferrell is one of the bravest comedic actors working today; someone willing to do anything for a laugh. Trouble is, I often don't laugh. Anchorman is laugh-out-loud funny. Ditto Elf and Old School, but sometimes I feel he has to rein the manic energy in, do half as much and maybe be twice as funny. Having said that, the Shark Week jokes in Step Brothers really make me giggle.

Mark: Richard, I share your ambivalence toward Ferrell. He's not my go-to guy for funny. Still, he's done some great work. My favourite Will Ferrell movies are two indie films he's starred in: Stranger Than Fiction and Everything Must Go. They're the equivalent of Jim Carrey's work in The Truman Show and Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind. Maybe not huge crowd pleasers, but they show the true breadth of his talent.

RC: I agree. I think Stranger Than Fiction is worth a rental. It's touching and funny, which for me is Ferrell's sweet spot. A Night at the Roxbury is a silly comedy but Ferrell's wide-eyed performance is the kind of thing I like from him. Outrageous, yes, but underneath the silly is a real guy. Sometimes I can't see the real guy underneath his characters and those are his movies that don't work for me. Except Zoolander. As fashion guru Mugatu he's so strange he dares you not to laugh at him.

MB: Yes, he's sometimes better in a supporting role in which his over-the-top zaniness doesn't sink the whole picture. Mugatu for sure, but also the mattress salesman in The Internship or Franz in The Producers. But generally, I find his man-child jock character wearying. Which is why, I think, Anchorman is such a successful movie. It's a Will Ferrell movie for people who don't care for Will Ferrell movies. Did you enjoy the sequel, Richard?

RC: I did. I think there is a lot of life left in Ron Burgundy. It's funny in an outrageous way. It's a bit too long, (and don't bother sitting through to the post credit scene unless you find the sight of Steve Carell eating cookies hilarious) but the buffoonery level is high in a season where serious drama seems to be the ticket.

In the last couple of weeks I have seen Ferrell, in character, sit in on some local newscasts and he fit right in. As long as there is media, egomaniac announcers and local news, there will be a place for Ron Burgundy.

MB: Yes, but let's not forget he's supported by a stellar cast of comic actors: Paul Rudd, Jim Carrey, Steve Carell, Vince Vaughn, Kristen Wiig. Even if Ferrell isn't your cup of tea, it's hard to believe this movie won't work.

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THESE PAGES COVER MOVIE START TIMES FROM FRI., DEC. 20 TO THURS., DEC. 26 TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

Southland Mall 3025 Gordon Rd.

12 Years a Slave (14A) Fri 6:50-9:55 Sat-Mon 12:10-3:15-6:50-9:55 Tue 12:10-3:15-6:50 Wed 3:15-6:50-9:55 Thu 12:10-3:15-6:50-9:55
American Hustle (14A) Fri 7:15-10:30 Sat-Mon 12:50-4-7:15-10:30 Tue 12:50-4-7:15 Wed 4-7:15-10:30 Thu 12:50-4-7:15-10:30
Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues (PG) No Passes Fri 7:40-10:45 No Passes Sat-Mon 1-4:30-7:40-10:45 No Passes Tue 1-4:30-7:40 No Passes Wed 4:30-7:40-10:45 No Passes Thu 1-4:30-7:40-10:45
Frozen (G) Sat 11:50 Sun 12:45 Mon-Tue 11:50 Thu 11:50
Frozen 3D (G) Fri 7:50-10:40 Sat 2:30-5:10-7:50-10:40 Sun 3:45-6:45-9:30 Mon 2:30-5:10-7:50-10:40 Tue 2:30-5:10-7:50 Wed 5:10-7:50-10:40 Thu 2:30-5:10-7:50-10:40
The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug (PG) No Passes Fri 9 No Passes Sat-Mon 1:45-5:20-9 No Passes Tue 12:40-4:05-7:35
The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug 3D (PG) No Passes Fri 7-10:35 No Passes Sat-Mon 12-3:30-7-10:35 No Passes Tue 12-3:30-7 No Passes Wed 3:30-7-10:35 No Passes Thu 12-3:30-7-10:35
Homefront (14A) Fri 6:55-9:40 Sat-Mon 1:10-4:10-6:55-9:40 Tue 1:10-4:10-6:55
The Hunger Games: Catching Fire (PG) Fri 7:10-10:40 Sat-Mon 12:30-3:55-7:10-10:40 Tue 12:30-3:55-7:10 Wed 3:55-7:10-10:40 Thu 12:30-3:55-7:10-10:40
Justin Bieber's Believe (G) Wed 5:15-7:45-10:10 Thu 12:25-2:50-5:15-7:45-10:15
Saving Mr. Banks (G) No Passes Fri 7:30-10:20 No Passes Sat-Mon 1:50-4:40-7:30-10:20 No Passes Tue 1:50-4:40-7:30 No Passes Wed 4:40-7:30-10:20 No Passes Thu 11:55-4:25-7:20-10:10
Walking With Dinosaurs (G) Sat-Tue 12:15 Thu 12:15
Walking With Dinosaurs 3D (G) Fri 7:25-9:50 Sat-Mon 2:35-5-7:25-9:50 Tue 2:35-5-7:25 Wed 5-7:25-9:50 Thu 2:35-5-7:25-9:50
The Wolf of Wall Street (18A) No Passes Wed 4:45-8:45 No Passes Thu 12:30-2:40-6:30-10:20

Galaxy Cinemas Normanview S.C. 420 McCarthy Blvd. N. Unit

47 Ronin (PG) No Passes Wed 2:05-4:45-7:35-10:25 No Passes Thu 11:15-2:05-4:55-7:45-10:35
American Hustle (14A) Fri 4:25-7:35-10:45 Sat-Mon 1:20-4:25-7:35-10:40 Tue 1:20-4:25-7:35 Wed 1:10-4:20-7:25-10:45 Thu 12:50-4-7:15-10:30
Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues (PG) No Passes Fri 4:55-7:45-10:35 No Passes Sat 11:15-2:05-4:55-7:45-10:40 No Passes Sun-Mon 2:05-4:55-7:45-10:30 No Passes Tue 2:05-4:55-7:45 No Passes Wed 2:10-4:50-7:40-10:30 No Passes Thu 2:15-5:05-7:55-10:45 No Passes Thu 11:25
Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas (G) Sat 11
Frozen (G) Fri 4:15-6:50 Sat 11-1:35-4:15-6:50 Sun-Tue 1:35-4:15-6:50 Wed 12:15-2:50-5:25-8 Thu 12-2:40-5:20-8
Frozen 3D (G) Fri 5:15-7:50-10:25 Sat 11:55-2:35-5:15-7:50-10:25 Sun-Mon 12:05-2:40-5:15-7:50-10:25 Tue 12:05-2:40-5:15-7:50
Grudge Match (PG) No Passes Wed 1:25-4:15-7-9:40 No Passes Thu 11:20-2-4:50-7:35-10:25
Le Hobbit: La désolation de Smaug (PG) No Passes Thu 11:40-10:15
The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug (PG) No Passes Fri 4:40-5:20-8:20-9 No Passes Sat 1-1:45-4:40-5:20-8:20-9 No Passes Sun 1:45-4:40-5:20-8:20-9 No Passes Mon 1-1:45-4:40-5:20-8:20-9 No Passes Tue 1-1:45-4:40-5:20 No Passes Wed 1:45-5:20-9 No Passes Thu 3:10-6:40
The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug 3D (PG) No Passes Fri 6:40-10:20 No Passes Sat 11:30-3-6:40-10:20 No Passes Sun-Mon 3-6:40-10:20 No Passes Tue 3-6:40 No Passes Wed 12-3:30-7:10-10:50 No Passes Thu 12:15-3:45-7:20-10:55 No Passes Fri 3:30-7:10-10:50 No Passes Sat-Mon 12-3:30-7:10-10:50 No Passes Tue 12-3:30-7:10
The Hunger Games: Catching Fire (PG) Fri 4:10-7:20-9:30-10:30 Sat-Mon 12:50-4:10-7:30-9:30-10:45 Tue 12:50-4:10-7:30 Wed-Thu 10:35
Royal Opera: The Nutcracker - Encore (STC) Sun 12:55
The Secret Life of Walter Mitty (G) No Passes Wed 1:50-4:30-7:20-10:15 No Passes Thu 11:45-2:30-5:25-8:10-11
Walking With Dinosaurs (G) Sat 11:45 Sun-Tue 11:55 Wed 12:05 Thu 11-1:20
Walking With Dinosaurs 3D (G) Fri 4:35-6:55-9:10 Sat-Mon 2:15-4:35-6:55-9:10 Tue 2:15-4:35-6:55 Wed 2:20-4:35-6:55-9:10 Thu 3:40-6:05-8:30-10:50
The Wolf of Wall Street (18A) No Passes Wed 12:45-4:45-8:45 No Passes Thu 11:10-3-6:50-10:40

Kramer IMAX Theatre 2903 Powerhouse Dr.

Kenya 3D: Animal Kingdom (STC) Fri 1-4:45 Sat 2:15-4:45 Sun 2:15
Rocky Mountain Express (STC) Fri 2:15-3:30-7 Sat 1-3:30-7 Sun 1-3:30

Golden Mile, 3806 Albert St.

About Time (PG) Mon 6:30-9:10 Thu 6:30-9:10
All Is Lost (G) Fri-Mon 4-9:20 Tue 4 Thu 4-9:20
The Best Man Holiday (14A) Fri-Mon 1:20-6:35 Tue 1:20 Thu 1:20-6:35
Captain Phillips (PG) Fri-Mon 9:10 Thu 9:10
Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs 2 (G) Fri-Mon 1:15-3:50-6:50 Tue 1:15-3:50 Thu 1:15-3:50-6:50
Dallas Buyers Club (14A) Fri-Mon 1:20-3:55-6:35-9:15 Tue 1:20-3:55 Thu 1:20-3:55-6:35-9:15
Despicable Me 2 (G) Fri-Mon 1:10-3:50-6:40 Tue 1:10-3:50 Thu 1:10-3:50-6:40
Free Birds (G) Fri-Tue 1:30-4:05 Thu 1:30-4:05
Jackass Presents: Bad Grandpa (14A) Fri-Mon 9:15 Thu 9:15
Last Vegas (PG) Fri-Mon 1:25-4-7-9:20 Tue 1:25-4 Thu 1:25-4-7-9:20
No Films Showing Today (STC) Wed
Philomena (PG) Fri-Mon 1:15-3:45-6:40-9:20 Tue 1:15-3:45 Thu 1:15-3:45-6:40-9:20 Thor: The Dark World (PG) Fri-Mon 1:10-3:45-6:30-9:05 Tue 1:10-3:45 Thu 1:10-3:45-6:30-9:05

Regina Public Library Film Theatre, 23 11 12th Ave.

Haute Cuisine (PG) Fri 7 Sat 9 Sun 7 No Films Showing Today (STC) Mon-Thu
Vic & Flo Saw a Bear (STC) Fri 9 Sat 7 Sun 9

Say it ain't so, Shia.
Star in hot water over 'blatant' theft of other artist's work

There may be legal ramifications for Shia LaBeouf after he acknowledged borrowing from another artist's work without giving proper credit.

LaBeouf debuted his short film, Howard Cantour.com, online on Monday starring Jim Gaffigan. It examines the life of an anguished online film critic. That was also the story line of a 2007 graphic novella by artist Daniel Clowes titled Justin M. Damiano.

Clowes declined to comment directly, but according to his publisher, Fantagraphics' Eric Reynolds, Clowes "is exploring his legal options."

Reynolds said Wednesday he was "baffled" by the news of LaBeouf's project, which he and Clowes got wind of on Monday. "LaBeouf changed the name of the main character, but he used the comic as a direct script and storyboard," Reynolds said. "Clowes has a real melodramatic voice that is very idiosyncratic and LaBeouf just used the dialogue word for word. There is no ambiguity. There is no way that anybody wrote this but Dan Clowes. It just defies any kind of logic or good sense. This was so blatant and inexcusable that it was as baffling as it was appalling."

LaBeouf's short began to circulate in 2012 at festivals like the Cannes Film Festival, but was just posted online officially on Monday. Soon afterward, it was taken down, and LaBeouf took to Twitter to apologize for lifting ideas from Clowes' work and passing them off as his own.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

People from normal childhoods with normal lives don't end up homeless. Dave disagrees.

{ Dave, in shelters for 12 years }

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Animation/Family

Walking with Dinosaurs 3D

Directors. Barry Cook, Neil Nightingale

Stars. Charlie Rowe, Karl Urban

This is a really odd movie. It looks like a high-end educational documentary you'd see on the History Channel, but anyone with more than a Grade 2 reading level will find the story slow and clichéd. The computer animated story of a herd of migrating dinosaurs and the dangers they face is beautiful looking but dragged down by terrible voice work. Imagine Jurassic Park without Jeff Goldblum or the fun and you get the idea.

RICHARD CROUSE

Biography Comedy

Saving Mr. Banks

Director. John Lee Hancock

Stars. Tom Hanks, Emma Thompson

The story of Walt Disney's (Tom Hanks) efforts to convince author P.L. Travers (Emma Thompson) to sell the rights to Mary Poppins is actually two stories folded into one. The first is a Hollywood tale, the second a psychological drama told in flashbacks about Travers's troubled father (Colin Farrell). Fine performances abound but this is Thompson's movie. Her portrayal of Travers is nuanced, split between the cantankerous woman she became with echoes of the innocent young girl she once was. **RICHARD CROUSE**

Crime/Drama

American Hustle

Director. David O. Russell

Stars. Christian Bale, Amy Adams, Bradley Cooper

American Hustle sees con artists Irving Rosenfeld (Christian Bale) and Sydney Prosser (Amy Adams) threatened with arrest unless they cooperate with ambitious FBI agent Richie DiMaso (Bradley Cooper). They help him run a complicated corruption investigation involving New Jersey mayor Carmen Polito (Jeremy Renner) but the sting gets out of control when the Mafia gets involved. Of the great ensemble cast Jennifer Lawrence really stands out in an entertainingly audacious movie.

RICHARD CROUSE

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METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

Simon Cowell.

Cowell not worried by Lovato's departure

Simon Cowell confirms that Demi Lovato will definitely not be coming back to The X Factor as a judge, and he insists it's not a shock to him in the slightest.

"I always knew she wasn't coming back because she's touring, so I knew that," he tells E! News.

As for her replacement? Sources say that "there haven't been any conversations about judges next year."

The Word

Brad Pitt playing down his milestone birthday

While Brad Pitt has previously seemed at peace with turning 50 this week, his birthday plans — or lack thereof — suggest something else.

"He's not doing anything for it and he said he doesn't want any surprises," a source tells Us Weekly.

"He really doesn't want to talk about his birthday much."

Of course, work is keeping him pretty busy, as Pitt is currently filming his Second World War drama, Fury, in London while Angelina Jolie is in Australia working on Unbroken.

Pitt will reportedly join her there this weekend, though, so there will be some sort of celebration of his milestone birthday.

"Brad said he's going to celebrate his birthday this weekend in Australia," the source says. "That's going to be the only thing he does."

Miley Cyrus. ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Miley Cyrus' tongue a nervous tick

The truth behind Miley Cyrus' penchant for sticking out her tongue in photos is that she's actually just really nervous, she insists in an interview with Barbara Walters.

"I get embarrassed to take pictures. That's actually the truth," she says. "I'm so embarrassed, because people are taking pictures of me, and I just don't know how to — I don't know how to smile, and just be awkward, so I stick my tongue out, because I don't know what else to do."

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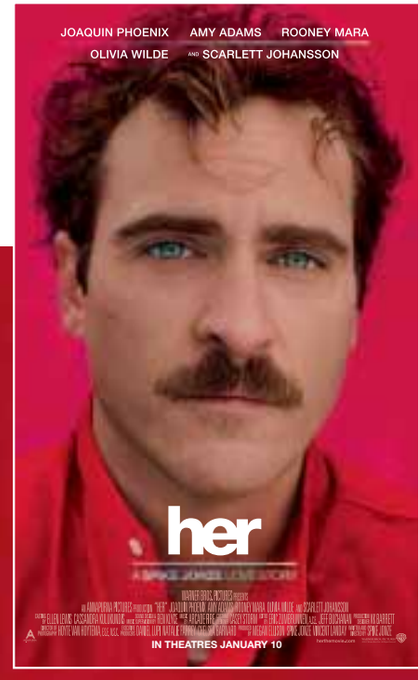

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Nikon Df — $3,099.95

Fujifilm X20 — $549

Sony Alpha 7 — $1,699.99 (body only)

Bigshot DIY Digital Camera — $89

Canon EOS 70D — $1,299.99

Festive focus

MIKE YAWNEY
For Metro

While many smartphones take impressive photos, any photographer will tell you they have yet to match the quality of standalone cameras. Here are a few of the best devices to truly impress the shutterbug on your list

Nikon Df — $3,099.95
A modern camera in a retro-style body. While many cameras feature touchscreen controls and menus, the 16.2-megapixel Nikon Df brings back classic mechanical dials to change settings, creating a simple approach to photography. If you are feeling techie you can use the optional wireless adapter to browse the camera's memory card on your smartphone or tablet.

Sony Alpha 7 — $1,699.99 (body only)
The world's smallest and lightest interchangeable lens full-frame camera. This 24.3-megapixel camera is full of features, including lightning quick autofocus, a tillable three-inch OLED display, and the ability to record uncompressed 1080p HD video.

Panasonic Lumix DMC-ZS30 — $399.99
A lot of features at a relatively low price point. This compact camera has a 20X zoom, three-inch touchscreen along with GPS capabilities so you always know where you took your pictures. If you have an Android phone you can control your camera remotely via Wi-Fi or automatically upload your pictures to social media.

Canon PowerShot SX280 HS — $269.95
A point-and-shoot with modes for every photographer, Canon's Smart Auto mode recognizes 58 predefined shooting situations so pictures turn out in even the strangest lighting conditions. This compact camera also features a whopping 20X optical zoom, which is impressive despite its small size.

Fujifilm X20 — $549
The camera that's ready when you are. The 12-megapixel Fujifilm X20 starts up in 0.5 seconds, auto focuses in 0.06 seconds and can snap photos in 0.01 seconds. This entry-level premium camera has a large optical viewfinder, the ability to shoot in RAW mode and a hot shoe for those who prefer an external flash.

Canon EOS 70D — $1,299.99
A full-feature DSLR with plenty of controls. Advanced users will love the in-depth options while beginners can take advantage of the simplistic basic mode. Those with a creative mind will love the Live View filter mode, which adds dream-like, miniature and colour filters in real time so you know what your photo will look like before you snap the shutter.

Pentax WG-10 — $199
The ultimate camera for the adventurer in your life. This 14-megapixel camera is crushproof, shockproof and waterproof. What really sets this camera apart is the digital microscope mode, which allows for magnified pictures of the smallest subjects — from insects to veins on leaves.

Bonzart Ampel — $180
It may look like a toy, but the Bonzart Ampel camera is anything but. This dual-lens camera is designed to shoot tilt-shift photos, a cool effect that makes everything look like miniature scale models. A unique gift for that creative person on your shopping list.

Bigshot DIY Digital Camera — $89
A camera for those who are curious about learning, the Bigshot camera comes in pieces, allowing the user to not only put it together, but learn about how cameras work in the process. At three megapixels, this camera may not take professional quality pictures, but the built-in lens wheel that toggles between regular, panoramic and 3D photos will ensure hours of fun for youngsters.

Bonzart Ampel — $180, clockwise, from left, Panasonic Lumix DMC-ZS30 — $399.99, Canon PowerShot SX280 HS — $269.95, and Pentax WG-10 — $199.

For more holiday gift ideas, please visit holiday.metronews.ca

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Holiday gift guide

5 shopping days left

The holiday season is a busy time for engagements as people get imaginative and romantic with their proposals. ALTAFULLA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Creating a fairy tale touch for the holidays

HEATHER BEAUMONT
For Metro

Four years ago, Craig Roy of It's All About You Event Planning learned that the rules of engagement begin with an imaginative marriage proposal.

A client decided to propose over the holidays and Roy and his special events team in Halifax suggested proposal options.

"The one that our client loved was going for a walk with their dogs and returning home to play outside in the snow," Roy wrote in an email. "They built a snowman together, including the props — carrot, scarf, twigs and mittens. Once the snowman was built, our client dug out a piece of the snowman's belly and placed the open ring box in the hole for his girlfriend to find."

Although clients often bring their own ideas, Roy and other marriage proposal planners pitch ideas.

"We ask consultation questions of our clients to get to know them and their ideas," Roy wrote. "The type of proposal really depends on their personality and who they are."

For Socrates Reppas of Marquis Jewellers in Toronto, the holiday season is a busy time of year.

"I have five engagement rings ready for pickup," he said. "They order custom diamond engagement rings from $1,600 to $150,000 to propose over the holidays. A lot of them like to propose on New Year's Eve."

Reppas' face brightens as he recounts the marriage proposals of love-struck men who enter his store to buy engagement rings. "They tell me what they're going to do when they buy the ring."

One man arranged to have his girlfriend drive by herself to his aunt's house in Niagara Falls. She arrived at sunset and turned into a long, tree-lined driveway lit up with Christmas tree lights. At the end of a driveway of about 100 metres, the path curved to reveal the house decorated with a big sign that read, "Will You Marry Me?"

"Some clients want to go above and beyond for their fiancée," Roy wrote. "Some want the fairy tale story to tell their friends and family about how they got engaged."

Reppas believes there is much more to holiday proposals. "They propose marriage over the holidays and on New Year's Eve to be romantic."

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Spiced Mexican Coffee. NEWS CANADA

Recipe. Spiced Mexican Coffee

There is nothing quite like the comforting feeling that a warm drink provides on a cold, winter night. Whether you are relaxing at home with family or socializing with friends, this Spiced Mexican Coffee recipe is just the thing to bring everyone together.

Ingredients:

- 4 cups (1 litre) water
- 6 cinnamon sticks
- 2 vanilla beans split
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) honey
- ⅓ cup (75 ml) finely ground Viennese or Italian roast coffee
- 6 packets Pure Via sweetener
- ¾ cup (175 ml) 1% low fat milk, steamed

Instructions:

1. Combine water, cinnamon sticks, vanilla beans and honey in three-quart (three-litre) saucepan. Heat on medium heat to boiling, stirring frequently.
2. Stir in coffee and Pure Via sweetener. Remove from heat. Let steep five minutes.
3. Strain coffee into six small mugs. Discard cinnamon and vanilla. Top evenly with steamed milk and serve. Makes six servings.

Tips: Vanilla beans can be split open lengthwise with a small knife, adding more flavour to the coffee. The tiny vanilla seeds can be used on top of the steamed milk. If vanilla beans are not available, use vanilla extract to taste.

NEWS CANADA

A fun way to learn

LeapFrog Read with Me Scout and Violet, $39.99, available in green and purple at most major retailers.

Sparkup The Magical Book eReader, $49.95, available at Chapters/Indigo, indigo.ca.

V-Tech Stencil and Learn Studio, $29.95, available at Target, target.ca.

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LIFE 3

Liquid Assets

Holiday cheer sipper

LIQUID ASSETS
Peter Rockwell
@therealwineguy
liquidassets@eastlink.ca

Last week was all about white wines for your holiday meal, so it's only right I suggest the right reds.

If you're convinced that only whites go with white meats, get over yourself. Reds can be an excellent match with poultry, especially when it's served old-school with plenty of savoury fixings and vegetal accompaniment.

He may not look it, but Tom turkey doesn't carry a lot of fat, which means you're going to want to avoid any red that is tannin heavy. Tannins love fat, so your bird will get lambasted if it meets a big-boned red like a New World Cabernet Sauvignon or a hip, Italian Aglianico (choose them if you're doing roast beef).

Take the bright and fruity path. Think California Zinfandel, New Zealand Pinot Noir, a French Beaujolais Cru or, my favourite, an Italian made with the Barbera grape.

From Piemonte, Bersano's 2011 Costalunga Barbera d'Asti ($11.95 - $14.99) is a glass full of strawberry, cherry, light earth and subtle spice that makes merry with turkey and all its eclectic Christmas plate mates.

Happy holidays! **PRICES REFLECT THE RANGE ACROSS THE COUNTRY. SOME PRODUCTS MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE IN ALL PROVINCES.**

A dash of sweet steals the Christmas spotlight

Roasted Chicken With Asian Glaze and Fruit Sauce. Tired of the same old turkey year after year? Be brave and try something new

ROSE REISMAN
For more, visit rosereisman.com or follow her on twitter @rosereisman

This is a holiday entrée with a delicious fruit sauce instead of traditional gravy. You can use this over any poultry such as Cornish hen or even turkey. If you're using turkey, multiply the glaze and sauce by three.

1. Preheat oven to 400 F. Place chicken in roasting pan.

Ingredients

- 1 whole chicken

Glaze

- 1 tsp crushed garlic
- 1 tsp minced ginger root (or 1/4 tsp ground ginger)
- 1/4 cup honey
- 1/4 cup sweet dessert wine (plum wine, Mirin or sweet Sake)
- Pinch chili flakes
- 1 tbsp margarine, melted
- Pinch dried coriander and/or cumin
- Salt and pepper
- 1/2 cup chicken stock

Sauce

- 1 tbsp cornstarch
- 1/2 cup chicken stock
- 1/4 cup chopped dates
- 1/4 cup chopped dried apricots

This recipe serves four. MARK SHAPIRO, FROM ROSE REISMAN BRINGS HOME LIGHT COOKING (MCM BOOKS)

2. Glaze: In bowl, mix garlic, ginger, honey, wine, chili flakes, margarine, coriander, salt and pepper to taste and stock; set half aside for sauce. Brush some of the remaining mixture over chicken. Bake for 60 minutes or until meat thermometer registers 160 F, basting with more honey mixture every 15 minutes.

3. Cut chicken into 4 quarters; place on serving dish and keep warm.

4. Sauce: Pour reserved honey mixture into small saucepan; stir in cornstarch, mixing well. Add chicken stock along with dates and apricots; cook over medium heat, stirring, for 2 minutes or until thickened. Pour over chicken. Remove skin before eating. **ROSE REISMAN BRINGS HOME LIGHT COOKING (MCM BOOKS) BY ROSE REISMAN**

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How does a designer deck the halls?

Holiday decorating. In a season of traditions, there's still room to shake things up a bit

The holiday season is synonymous with tradition. But that doesn't mean you have to fill your home with the same holiday decorations in the same colour scheme every year.

"Until four years ago, I was Scrooge-y when it came to holiday decorating — a result of seeing the same old thing over and over again," says Brian Patrick Flynn, an interior designer from Los Angeles and executive producer of HGTV.com's Holiday House.

But after finding ways to "reinvent the look and feel of Christmas for my own home," Flynn says he "rediscovered how much fun seasonal styling can be when you make it your own."

For a creative twist on a traditional Christmas tree, designer Brian Patrick Flynn uses a muted colour palette of white, cream, gray and tan for a look that's under-stated and elegant. BRIAN PATRICK FLYNN, HGTV.COM HOLIDAY HOUSE

Move the tree, and change the palette

A Christmas tree doesn't have to stay parked in one place. Flynn recommends putting a small tree on wheels (maybe in a vintage metal wagon or an old metal washtub with casters on the bottom) so you can change its location when you're entertaining to create space or to bring extra holiday style to a different room.

Another option is ditching red and green tree decorations for an understated colour palette. "This year I created a tone-on-tone tree using all shades of light grey," Flynn says. "To do this right, it's all about having a balance of texture, finish, shape, scale and proportion."

Try a white tree if you'll be using light colours and neutrals, or a green tree with decorations in earth tones.

To shake up your tree's decorations, Jon Call of Mr. Call Designs suggests going with a theme.

"Last year for a client, I indulged in masses of vintage mercury-glass ornaments of all sizes and shapes. Silver was literally dripping off the tree. It was spectacular," he says. "This year we are changing it up a bit and creating a completely edible tree, including childhood favourites such as homemade popcorn balls, small sacks of chocolates tied with a ribbon and hung from the branches, and pungent gingerbread."

Or ditch the tree altogether

If you have minimal space, Call says you can skip the tree altogether without losing any holiday cheer. Instead, cluster together a bunch of white poinsettias. They set a holiday tone in a fresh way, he says, and in a large group look "almost like snowfall."

Or create your own "tree" out of branches: "In my kitchen, I love to fill a large galvanized pot with armfuls of branches full of red berries," Call says. "As the season progresses, I simply clip incoming cards to the arrangement so that everyone can enjoy. It's become a tradition over the years, and everyone loves to come and check out my 'family tree.'"

Focus on unexpected places

Christmas doesn't just happen in your living room. Flynn suggests adding a tiny tree to any space, even a breakfast nook.

To spice up a staircase, he created a garland out of "old men's flannel and denim shirts cut and stitched" into pennant squares with tiny pockets. Strung together, they create a colorful advent calendar (mark all 25 days with sew-on varsity letters). Each one can hold a tiny gift and "add life and activity to an otherwise humdrum space." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Don't hold back

"The holidays are a time for indulgence, and that always means colour to me. Commit to a colour scheme and go for broke!"
Jon Call of Mr. Call Designs

Make it all about the mantel

- "One of the most searched-for terms on HGTV.com is 'mantel decorating,'" Flynn says. For homes with a flat-panel TV mounted above the mantel, he has a high-tech idea: Burn images to DVD that co-ordinate with the accessories you lay out on your mantel, then let the DVD run during holiday entertaining.
- For one project, Flynn displayed colorful pop art images (including a reindeer by artist Jonathan Fenske) on the TV, and then put colorful items like candy in apothecary jars and brightly colored ornaments on the mantel "to make it all pop."

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Flames' road trip goes through Motown

The Red Wings' Brian Lashoff, left, and the Flames' Lee Stempniak chase a loose puck on Thursday night in Detroit. The Flames, who had lost their last two prior to travelling to Detroit, are in the midst of a five-game road trip that will conclude on Saturday in Pittsburgh against the Penguins. For the result from Thursday's game, go to metronews.ca. DUANE BURLESON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ottawa makes its CFL comeback, again

Third time's a charm?
The Ottawa Rough Riders made a splash in 1876, followed by the Renegades in 2002

Quoted

"They love their football and it's been missing for a while and hopefully the atmosphere comes back."

Korey Banks, B.C. Lions defensive back, who was acquired by the Ottawa Renegades in 2004.

Kerry Joseph remembers the game like it was yesterday.

Down 33-10 entering the fourth quarter to the Montreal Alouettes on Canada Day in 2005, the third-year quarterback rallied the Ottawa Renegades to an improbable 39-36 overtime victory at Frank Clair Stadium.

"That one definitely is a good visual in my mind," Joseph said recently.

It would be one of the only highlights in the Renegades' brief four-season existence.

Like the Rough Riders before them, the league's second foray into the nation's capital sputtered due to front-office mismanagement, poor performances on the field and a disillusioned fan base.

The Renegades ceased operations before the 2006 campaign, but a few remnants of the club remain scattered throughout the league with the CFL's third attempt in Ottawa — this time as the expansion Redblacks — set to begin play in 2014.

"I had a feeling it would come back, No. 1 because it's the capital of Canada," said Joseph, who spent the last four seasons primarily as a backup with the Edmonton Eskimos. "How could you not want to have a football franchise in that city? I felt the opportunity was going to present itself again."

When reflecting on why the Renegades went under, Joseph pointed to a major disconnect between ownership, management and coaches.

"The communication from the top down, the structure, wasn't there," he said. "If you look at any type of business or any type of enterprise, if it's not structured properly eventually things are going to crumble and that's unfortunately what took place."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

NBA

Bryant hit by injury bug again

Kobe Bryant is expected to miss about six weeks with an injured left knee, dealing the second major injury setback of the year to the Los Angeles Lakers' superstar guard.

An MRI exam on Thursday revealed Bryant has a fracture in his lateral tibial plateau — the top of his shinbone near his knee.

Bryant made his season debut with the Lakers Dec. 8 after nearly eight months away while recovering from a torn Achilles tendon. He apparently was hurt again Tuesday night in Memphis while playing his fourth game in five nights.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CFL

Stubler takes reins of Calgary defence

The Calgary Stampeders hired veteran Rich Stubler as their new defensive co-ordinator Thursday.

Stubler replaces Rick Campbell, who left to become the head coach of the expansion Ottawa Redblacks.

Stubler, 64, spent the last two seasons as the B.C. Lions defensive co-ordinator. THE CANADIAN PRESS

CFL

Bombers extend all-star Turner

All-star defensive tackle Bryant Turner says it was a no-brainer for him to sign an extension with the Winnipeg Blue Bombers through 2016.

Turner said Thursday there may be some morale building next season for a team that finished 3-15 in 2013, but he believes the Bombers have players who are committed to winning and the city has the best football fans in the world.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
A clash of opposing viewpoints is likely at work today. Because you need to get along with both sides, you must stay neutral. The best approach is to treat it all as a bit of a joke.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
If you find yourself up against a tough opponent today, you should back off and live to fight another day. The planets warn this is a battle you cannot win. The only sensible course is to withdraw, for now.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
You don't have to be nice to people because you want to spare their feelings. If there is something that needs to be said, give it to them straight.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
You would be wise to be on your guard over the next 24 hours as the planets warn someone you work or do business with is being more than a little deceitful. Don't judge others by what they say, judge them by what they do.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
A moment's hesitation could cause you grief — at the very least you will kick yourself for not trusting your instincts. Don't listen to those who say you should be cautious. It may be good advice for them but it's not right for you.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Check facts today, especially those that a colleague says are OK and you don't have to worry about. If you give them the green light to proceed now, you may regret it later.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
You may be tempted to do something drastic today but the planets warn the results are as likely to be negative as positive. Why not just wait a while and let the current situation work itself out?

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
Be careful what you say. You could easily go over the top and let slip something that causes trouble. It might also cost you financially if others get the impression that you can't hold your tongue.

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
You appear to be having second thoughts about a plan that previously you thought was the key to success. Maybe you are right to hesitate but you are going to have to make a choice and stick with it.

♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
It would appear that in your haste to get ahead, you have overlooked some small but important detail. Identify your mistake, correct it, move on.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
A minor dispute could easily get out of hand today, especially if you insist that you are in the right and everyone else is wrong. You're not the only one who is stubborn, so a standoff is likely.

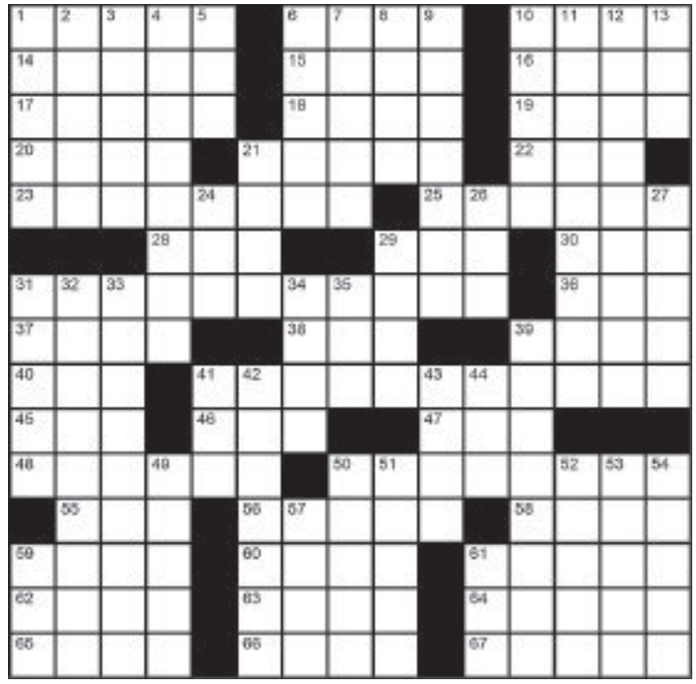
♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
State your case today but don't get upset if others disagree and try to pick holes in your arguments. The world is a big enough place for all shades of opinion, so agree to disagree.

SALLY BROMPTON

Crossword: Canada Across and Down

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers.

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



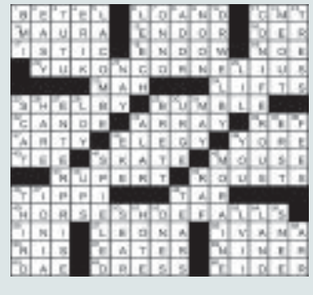
Across

1. December 21st, 1913: Invented by Arthur __ of the New York World, the greatest game at #12-Down
6. Season
10. Inscribe
14. Grease again
15. Woodwind
16. Q. "Is '__.' _ way to abbreviate any coming-in plane?" A. "Yes."
17. Nets
18. Volcanic flow
19. London lockup
20. Weapon: French
21. More kind
22. Mr. Asner's
23. Bag type
25. Legal scholar
28. Cousin __
29. Masc. opposite
30. Defunct airline
31. Canadian journalist on FOX News who was a MuchMusic host: 2 wds.
36. Particle
37. Ancient war god
38. Granny: German
39. Rope
40. Anderson Cooper's station
41. Will Ferrell's 'Anchorman': 2 wds.
45. Ms. Carpenter, for short
46. Alias, e.g.
47. Nice one?
48. Hockey's Conn __ Trophy
50. 1924... Simon & __: Publishers of the first book of #12-Downs (Trivia! Richard L. Simon is the father of the singer/songwriter at #9-Down)
55. Christmas __
56. Archaic anesthetic
58. 'Slithy' Lewis Carroll creature
59. Cuckoos
60. Young farm animal
61. Fine cottons
62. Going __ (Arguing): 2 wds.
63. Turkey, chicken, etc.
64. Fragrance
65. Unchanged: 2 wds.
66. Building extensions
67. "You're still the one _ ___ good night..." (Shania Twain line)

Down

1. __ havoc
2. Long for
3. Montreal-born actress Ms. Shearer (b.1902 - d.1983)
4. What a bowling ball could knock over: 2 wds.
5. Chicago trains
6. __ acid (Romaine lettuce stuff)
7. Surprised, taken __
8. Zero, in tennis
9. Bit of Carly Simon's "You're So Vain": "Then you flew your __ __ up to Nova Scotia..."
10. Gung-ho
11. Custom
12. Puzzle celebrating its 100th Anniversary!
13. Mr. Holbrook
21. International†org.
24. Gibraltar, e.g.
26. Hmms...
27. Actress Jessica
29. Herr's wife
31. Mr. Black's
32. Christmas Tree decorations
33. English king: name + Roman Numeral
34. __ fide
35. Diplomatic bldg.
39. Pool table prop: 2 wds.
41. Hurray!
42. American painter Georgia
43. Industrial region of Germany
44. Wildebeest
49. Quizzes
50. Wrap
51. Lockups
52. Moviedom's Marisa
53. Linda of "Dynasty"
54. Respites
57. Hammer
59. US driving org.
61. 23rd Greek letter

Yesterday's Crossword



Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.

	3		6		7	1	5	
				9				7
5						9		6
	2		5			8	3	
				1				
	9	4			8		1	
4		7						3
9			2					
	5	2	9		3		6	

Yesteday's Sudoku

7	3	8	2	4	5	9	6	1
4	5	6	8	9	1	7	3	2
2	1	9	3	7	6	4	8	5
9	8	3	1	5	4	6	2	7
5	2	4	6	3	7	1	9	8
1	6	7	9	2	8	5	4	3
8	7	5	4	6	2	3	1	9
3	4	1	7	8	9	2	5	6
6	9	2	5	1	3	8	7	4

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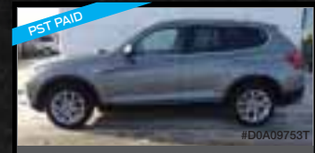
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2009 FORD FLEX LIMITED AWD
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HTD CLOTH, POWER DR SEAT, SYNC, SAT RADIO, REV SENSING, LOW KMS, 4 TO CHOOSE FROM!

2013 FORD EDGE SEL AWD
$31,964* / $238*

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LUXURY PKG, HTD LEATHER, SLIDING WINDOW, SYNC, CONSOLE SHIFT, 1 OWNER, 9,800 KMS, LOCAL TRADE

2013 FORD F-150 FX4
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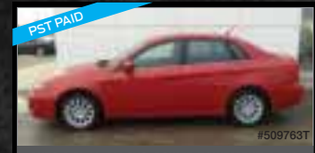
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AUTO,2.5L I4, ALLOYS, POWER EQUIPMENT, A/T/C, LOCAL TRADE, ONLY 85,000KMS

2008 SUBARU IMPREZA AWD
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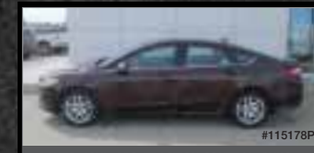
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AUTO, 4CYL, ABS, TRACTION CONTROL, SYNC, SAT RADIO, POWER SEAT, LOW KMS

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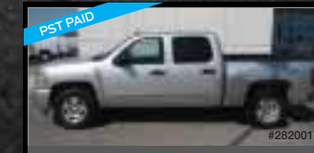
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2011 CHEV SILVERADO LS
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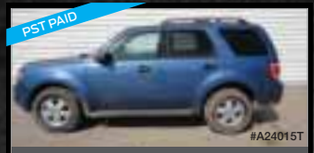
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4CYL, 6 SPD AUTO, MOONROOF, SYNC, CONVIENENCE PKG, PWR SEAT, LOCAL TRADE

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2013 FORD ESCAPE SE AWD
$28,954* / $217*

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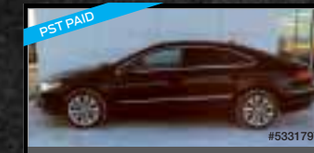
3.6L V6, HTD LEATHER, 6SPD AUTO, MOONROOF, UCONNECT, 19" ALLOYS

2012 DODGE JOURNEY R/T AWD
$25,845* / $186*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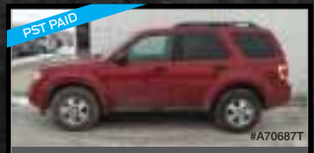
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3.0L V6, CDN WINTER PKG, HTD LEATHER, SYNC, SAT RADIO, 43,000 KMS, LOCAL TRADE

2011 FORD ESCAPE XLT
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HTD LEATHER, MYFORD TOUCH, MOONROOF, REV CAMERA, NAV, POWER LIFTGATE, 18,000 KMS

2013 FORD FLEX SEL AWD
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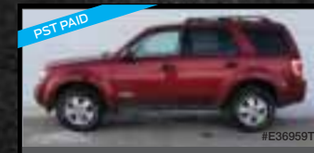
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